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What is Eternal Life?

WIRT DEXTER BINGHAM

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Mr. J. C. Rowell,

Librarian,

Dear Sir,

At your

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which I have edited
for him. I am es-
pecially interested
in placing the little bro
in the four universi
and colleges with wh
we have been con-
nected.

Yours very truly,

Millicent Bond Bing

THIS DISCOURSE by one who was a spiritual success, is one of several manuscripts left in care of his sister by the writer, and is sent out to his friends and to those who might be interested, both as a memorial and in the belief that this work, labored over during many long years of suffering, bears upon it the stamp of a wholesome earnestness and a spirituality which can not but be a help to those who read.

What is Eternal Life?

WIRT DEXTER BINGHAM

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Introduction

"And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."—*John 17:3.*

After all, words are not very adequate vehicles for the expression of thought. This phrase, *life eternal,* for instance, doubtless brings up in your mind and in mine, varying ideas as to what is included therein. And yet, if you and I do not get from this phrase the meaning which Christ, the speaker, intended, it should bear, we must necessarily have a false idea, or an entirely inadequate one, of what it really means.

It is quite a usual custom for people to import into written words their own conceptions. Instead of taking from a verse of the Bible that meaning which Christ put into it, they put into the verse their own conceptions, and imagine that they are getting Christ's meaning, when this is not the case at all.

This is, and has been for many centuries, the cause of more religious confusion than any other one thing; and the prevalence of fragmentary

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Bible study has undoubtedly contributed to this result. Also the too-common custom among ministers of selecting for a text a verse of the Bible, and from that text landing almost anywhere, is another cause of mental confusion.

It is often quite possible to land almost anywhere by selecting one verse of the Bible for a text, and preaching a whole sermon from it. Witness the many ministers during and previous to the Civil War, who defended slavery from the pulpit. Witness today the defense of polygamy among the Mormons.

All we have to do to land almost anywhere is to take from the Bible what seems desirable to us, and let the rest go. Instead of extracting the real Christ-given meaning from a verse by checking it up with the rest of Christ's words, and thus getting the real meaning, the custom has been too common for the minister to take the text and import quantities of his own conceptions and ideas into it.

The result of this course of proceeding must be that our conceptions are often wrong, even where we think we are right. We cannot take truth in teaspoon doses and have any reasonable assurance that it *is* the truth.

Truth, as given in the Gospel of Christ, is a veritable network, each strand of which supports not only one, but many other strands; and one could not be truly said to have a fair understanding of any truth therein contained, except they possess a fair understanding of every other supporting truth there given.

Truth is not composed of many different fragments placed together, but is in itself a perfect and complete whole. The moment any part of truth is detached from the main body which supports it, it becomes not only a possibility to force this fragment of truth into a meaning entirely foreign to it, but an almost inevitable consequence of such detachment; this part not being in its true position in the arch of truth, the whole structure is slightly deranged.

Let us, then, endeavor by every means in our power to fill out the meaning of the phrase *life eternal* in the way in which Christ intended it should be filled out. Let us endeavor to extract all that fullness of meaning from these words that Christ intended they should contain.

In order that we may get this full meaning, and get it correctly, there appears to be but one course of action open to us, and that is: To

search the Gospel of Christ for other references to this same thing—*eternal life.*

You notice I say this same *thing,* and not these same words—eternal life. There are other expressions which Christ uses to convey this meaning, as, *everlasting life.* Everlasting means eternal. According to Webster, these two words are synonyms, the only difference being that *eternal* means without beginning and without end; while *everlasting* simply means without end. Therefore, as applied to all beings having a definite beginning, *eternal* must refer to the future only, and is absolutely identical in meaning with *everlasting* whenever so used.

What we seek is the meaning,—be the words what they may. We seek Christ's conception of the thing itself.

By taking all references which Christ makes to *eternal life* and placing them together, we shall obtain the fullness of his meaning, with least chance of error.

If at any time it may appear that I wander from the subject, or repeat the same quotation with what seems undue frequency, I trust that you will bear in mind what I have said about the whole network of truth, and remember that I am

trying to make plain some of these supporting strands, without which a proper conception of any single one strand would be impossible.

This will also render apparent the necessity for quoting a much larger proportion of Scripture than is usual in works of this nature, but I trust the high prize sought for: truth as interpreted by Truth; truth as interpreted by Christ, may be ample excuse for inflicting as few interruptions of my own upon you as can be got along with. Certainly the more we can interpret the words of Christ *by* the words of Christ, the less our chance of error.

In this attempt I must also ask your kind indulgence toward my shortcomings, since I shall unquestionably fall very far short of doing this work as I should like to do it.

WIRT DEXTER BINGHAM.

Santa Monica, California,
April 25, 1909.

What is Eternal Life?

Definition of eternal life

SECTION 1. "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent."—John 17: 3.

First we learn as above, that life eternal is: to know God and Jesus Christ; that is, he that merely knows them *has* eternal life.

We have all been acquainted with notable members of that class of people who continually misinterpret the motives of others, even when those others are noble-minded people, imputing to their noblest actions motives of self-interest—the motives which under the same circumstances would actuate them. They not only appear to be, but really *are,* unable to conceive of anybody doing a noble act, untinged by motives of self-interest.

For instance, you have all probably come in contact with people whose sole idea of honesty is to keep within the law; in whose opinion any act is all right which cannot be punished by process of law. They could no more understand any one being honest for the sake of honesty itself, than they could sprout out wings and fly.

These are the people who say, when they hear of any noteworthy, honest action—such as a man's returning a pocketbook found containing a large sum of money: "What a fool he was, why didn't he keep it? He needed the money."

So it is with them; anybody who does any action of this kind is, in their estimation, either a fool or a religious crank. Such an act is beyond their comprehension; they do not *know* honesty.

The mere power to comprehend in its fullness a noble act, is from the same block as the act itself—of the same spirit. In order therefore to know God; to comprehend* him—not his infinity, but the motives of his doing—we must par-

* Webster would doubtless take exception to this use of the word *comprehend,* since he says: "The very idea of God supposes that he may be apprehended, though not comprehended, by rational beings."

Now, nothing can be surer than that God comprehends himself. Paul says: "For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." (II Cor. 6: 16.) In so far, then as God *does* dwell in us, in so far as we *are* one with him; in just that measure do we comprehend him.

Therefore the word comprehend in this limited use, expresses the meaning I wish to convey better than apprehend, which means to mentally grasp. Now one cannot know God by the mind alone; the process of knowing God involves the heart and soul as well as the mind.

take of his nature. That Spirit which is in him must also be in us.

If then that Spirit be in us which is in him, shall we not have eternal life? Are not both God and the Spirit of God eternal?

If his Spirit forms a part of us, we shall be eternal as he is eternal; consequently to know God *is* eternal life—to merely *know* him.

We can only learn to know God through the words and life of Christ: "No man cometh unto the Father, but by me." (John 14:6.) Therefore he who learns to know God, must also learn to know Christ, since knowledge of both is therein contained.

Labor necessary to obtain the meat of Christ's Gospel

SECTION 2. In John 6:27, we find: "Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you."

Everlasting life, as we have seen, expresses the same meaning as eternal life and thus we have here another conception of eternal life. We are instructed to labor for that meat which endureth unto eternal life—which Christ gives unto us.

On looking around to see what possessions Christ has left unto us, we find that there is but

one—his Gospel, which he has given unto us; that he has sacrificed his life for us, in order that he might leave to every individual man, woman, and child as a precious personal possession, his Holy Gospel.

But every personal possession we own is valuable according to the use we make of it, and the word of Christ is no exception to this rule. If we make no use of it, save as a parlor ornament, that will be the extent of its value to us. If, on the other hand, we regard it as a most precious personal possession, and labor diligently for that meat—the true meaning, which is in it; if we make that meat our own, it will endure in us unto eternal life, and thus be to us more precious than all things.

The meat is there, but requires labor to extract it, to make it our own; even as God has made it necessary that all the fruits of the earth require labor expended upon them, in order to make them useful to man; whether merely gathering, as in the case of wild fruits, or elaborate processes of manufacture, as in the case of cotton. Some form of labor is necessary in every case. So he has also made it necessary in order to accumulate spiritual possessions—heavenly

treasures, that we must labor; and the extent of our spiritual possessions will be in proportion to the amount of labor expended in their acquirement, differences of soil and climate considered. By soil I mean the individual nature of the man, that in which the seed, or word of God, grows;* and by climate, the environment of the man.

The meat which the Gospel contains is surely a right understanding of the word, that interpretation which Christ himself intended it should bear. If we get any other interpretation than this, we get that out of it which Christ did not put into it, and it consequently cannot be that meat.

The meat, then, is not the mere words of the Gospel, but the real Christ-given meaning back of them. The word itself is but the lifeless husk, open sometimes to many different interpretations; the *real meaning* of the word is that meat for which we must labor, sifting, comparing, deriving, with God's help, that completeness of meaning from the four Gospels, which any single one of them must necessarily give inadequately.

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* "Now the parable is this: the seed is the word of God." (Luke 8: 11.)

Christ's Gospel is the water of life

SECTION 3. In John 4: 13, 14, we find: "Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again:

"But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

Here again we have everlasting life, which to us is the same as eternal life. Hence he that drinks of the water that Christ gives has eternal life. And what is this water that Christ has given us? Again we see that the only direct possession that Christ has given to all men is his Gospel.

He has given his life *for* all men, but his Gospel *to* all men; hence his Gospel being the only possession which he has bequeathed directly to us individually, must be this water, or must contain this water of life. Whichever be the case is without importance, as long as we know where this water is, and how to drink it; and it is plainly evident that there is but one way in which this water may be absorbed into ourselves, and that is to read and meditate on the Gospel wherein this water is, and it will thereby be in us a well of water springing up into eternal life.

It were desirable that we drink abundantly, in order that the well may be a deep one, and that the water of life which flows from it may be most plentiful; for why should we have but a little rill of this water in us, when we may have a deep and abundant flow?

Why should we have but a little eternal life, perfect though it be, when we may have a deep and abundant eternal (spiritual) life? For Christ has given to us that very inexhaustible well from which he derived his own eternal life, —the word of God.

Christ's flesh and blood is the true meaning of the word of God

SECTION 4. Continuing we find in John 6: 54 and 63: "Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life"; and in further explanation, "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, *they* are spirit, and *they* are life."

What does this mean? It surely *must* mean that the life,—the eternal life—is in the words that Christ speaks, and that the flesh profits nothing as flesh, but only *as the Word*. You recollect John 1: 14: "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us."

There is also a further lesson here, in the manner in which he speaks of eating his flesh.

Part of the food that we eat every day builds up our physical self, becomes a part of our outward self. In the same way this flesh of Christ, the real meaning of the word, which we absorb each day, builds up our spiritual self, becomes a part of our inward self.

This likewise explains many references made by Christ to being *in us*: as in John 14:20, "At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you." If then, Christ be in us; being, as he is, eternal, if he be a part of us; must we not be eternal, in so far as he *is* a part of us? And if we are in Christ, form a part of Christ, must we not be eternal, in so far as we *are* part of Christ?

Referring to the verse at the beginning of this section we find that Christ says we must not only eat his flesh, but drink his blood, to have eternal life.

What was the blood of Christ, spiritually speaking? It must have been that from which his spiritual self was built up. Since blood is that by means of which the physical man is built up, and as it is derived from food; so, in a spiritual sense, the blood of Christ must be taken to mean that from which the spiritual man is

built up, that food which gives life to the spiritual man.

Now, in seeking what gave life to the spiritual part of Jesus, we find the following verse: "As the living Father sent me, and *I live by the Father:* so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me." (John 6: 57.) Since blood is that which gives life to the physical man, it follows, spiritually speaking, that the Father must have been that blood which gave life to Christ. And, since the Father could not dwell in Christ bodily, it must have been by means of his Spirit, his inmost self, that he gave life unto Christ.

Hence we find that to drink the blood of Christ is to absorb into ourselves the Spirit of the Father. And, therefore, to eat the flesh and drink the blood of Christ means: to read the word and absorb into ourselves the Spirit of God. He that does this *has* eternal life.

Now there is another reference in John 6: 51, which would properly come under this section, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread he shall live forever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." To live forever *is* eternal life, as re-

gards all beings having a definite beginning. This verse fills in, and renders more forcible, the matter we have just discussed.

There is here no reference to the blood, but this in no way disturbs the correctness of our previous conclusions; since to "eat of this bread" obviously means to absorb into ourselves the true meaning of the word, and he who does this absorbs into himself the Spirit of God. For does not Paul say: "Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." (I Cor. 2:11.) If, therefore, we know the things of God, by absorbing into ourselves the true meaning of the word, it is not we that know them, but the Spirit of God in us.

Christ says: "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you *they* are spirit, and *they* are life." (John 6:63.) It is plain that when Christ says his *words are spirit,* and *are life,* that he does not mean the mere symbols, but the true meanings which those symbols are intended to convey.

Therefore the definition of eternal life which we derive from this section is: eternal life is to eat the flesh, and drink the blood of Christ; which means to read the word of God, and ab-

sorb into ourselves the Spirit of God; or, what is the same thing, to absorb into ourselves the *true meaning* of the word of God.

That Christ spoke the verses above in the sense in which they are here interpreted is rendered clear, not only by the verses themselves and their agreement with each other, but by the fact that his mission upon earth was a spiritual one, to give unto men eternal — that is, spiritual — life.

The understanding of God's commandment is eternal life

SECTION 5. Continuing we find in John 12: 49, 50: "But the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting."

We have here *life everlasting* again, which is, in respect to us, the very meaning of eternal life. These words which Christ speaks are the commandment of God, which is eternal life. If then these words, this commandment, be absorbed into us, become a part of us, shall we not have eternal life? If in the case of Jesus "the Word was made flesh," in our case also shall not the word be made flesh?

Shall we not by this method become one with Christ? as mentioned in John 17:21 and 23:

"That they all may be *one;* as thou, Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be *one in us.*" "I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one." If our will on all matters be changed by this absorbed word so as to coincide with God's will, shall we not be one in Christ, and through him in God also?

Who can deny that this absorbed word of God will produce this result? None surely of those who in true humility of heart unceasingly search the word of God for light, submitting their wills unto the will of God, until finally they find their will is becoming by the marvelous influence of Christ changed so as to be more and more like unto God's will, until at last when we are perfected in Christ, our will shall become even as the will of God on all matters whatever.

Who can deny that while this changing process is going on, Christ dwells in such? Yes, that by the blessed influence of Christ himself, this change is produced?

Our definition of eternal life here then is,—eternal life is the commandment of God which is the word of Christ.

He that has in him the true meaning of the commandment of God *has* eternal life.

Deep meditation necessary

SECTION 6. We find in John 5:24: "Verily verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life; and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." Here we have everlasting life again, which is equivalent to eternal life.

Then eternal life is here composed of two things,—first, the hearing of the word; second, the believing on him that sent him. Had these things not both been necessary Christ would not have put them here. The inference is plain that the process of hearing should be followed in natural order by the process of believing on him that sent him; and this believing does not, of course, mean a mere assent to the existence and supreme power of God, but carries with it the idea that we must, in some satisfactory degree, know God; that we must know—comprehend—his character as well as apprehend his power; for how can we believe on that which we know not, and how can we know without comprehending?

Words are dead things. Ideas, thoughts, are live things. Mere assent to the existence of God and his supreme power is a dead thing. To

know God, to comprehend his character is a live thing, and therein *is* eternal life. The power to know God and comprehend his character can only be reached through Jesus Christ—through his word.

God is as far above man as the heavens are above the earth; man cannot therefore know and comprehend God's character in any way whatever, save by the Spirit of God which he gives unto us through the medium of his Holy Word; and this endowment with God's Spirit and consequent comprehension of his character, with the eternal life following, is not, and cannot be, the result of mere formal reading, but of deep meditation and thought on what we read.

To believe on Christ is to seek the honor that comes from God

SECTION 7. We find in John 6:47: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life."

Here again we have everlasting, to which eternal is equivalent when applied to the future life of man, and thus we have another definition of eternal life.

To believe on Jesus Christ is eternal life. Here we have a word, believe, to which we are liable to attribute a wrong meaning, or at least an entirely inadequate one, if we are not very

careful; as previously mentioned we are apt to put our own meaning into a word, that meaning to which we have been accustomed, instead of that meaning which Christ has put into the word.

Now in John 5:44, Christ says respecting the word believe: "How can ye believe, which receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that cometh from God only?" Here his inference is plain, a direct statement put in the form of a question, that no persons *can* believe who receive honor one of another, and seek not that honor which comes from God only.

Here he makes plain that his use of the word believe is not intended to convey merely the meaning of mental assent to the fact that he is the Son of God, and that we have eternal life through him, though that meaning is also included; but this belief to which he refers is incompatible with any other condition of heart, than that condition which seeks the honor that comes from God only.

Do we seek this? Here then is a test by which we may know whether or not we possess a belief unto eternal life. It is evident that we must seek the honor which comes from God first of all, since Christ says respecting the very

necessities of life: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." (Matthew 6:33.)

If then as between the very necessities of physical life and God's righteousness we are to seek first God's righteousness, how much more ought we to seek first the honor which comes only from God, as between the honor which comes from man, and that which comes from God only. For physical life cannot be maintained without food and clothing, but to be honored of men is not necessary either to physical or spiritual life.

It is clear from what has been said that no man is able to possess a belief unto eternal life except he seek first of all that honor which comes only from God; for if he seeks that honor second it is apparent that he will be in the position of a man trying to serve two masters, and Christ has said: "No man can serve two masters." (Matthew 6:24.)

Therefore the man who seeks first the honor which comes from man, and second the honor that comes only from God, cannot be a servant of God, and hence cannot have eternal life, or

that belief in Christ which is equivalent to eternal life.

He in whom Christ's words abide has eternal life

SECTION 8. In John 8:51 we find: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death." Now never to see death means eternal life, to us; hence it follows that eternal life is to keep Christ's saying. And how can a man keep Christ's saying except he first know the saying, and how can he really know it except he read it diligently, and meditate upon it without ceasing? For no man can really know the saying of Christ except he understand it.

He that keeps the saying of Christ must have in himself the power of Christ, since the power of man is not sufficient to keep the commandment of God perfectly; and that power of Christ was by and through the word of God. (John 12:49.) "For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say and what I should speak.

"And I know that his commandment is life everlasting."

Therefore in man also must this power of Christ be by and through the word of God.

Christ says in John 15:4: "Abide in me, and I in you." In verse 7 of the same chapter he says: "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." Can this be explained on any other supposition than that he in whom Christ's words abide, will abide in Christ? Then if he in whom Christ's words abide, thereby has Christ's words in himself, will not both the will and the power of Christ be there also,—the will and the power to keep Christ's saying? If then to keep Christ's saying be eternal life, will this man not have eternal life?

The righteousness which is by faith is eternal life

SECTION 9. In Matthew 25:46, we find: "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal."

Here we learn that to be righteous is eternal life. Now we know that God only is righteous, in thought, word, and deed. Therefore it may well occur to us to consider whether any save God or Christ—"I and my Father are one"—shall ever attain to eternal life.

We know that no man, as a man, has ever attained or ever can attain to absolute righteousness, since Christ says: "There is none good but one, that is, God," (Matthew 19:17), and

since he also says concerning himself: "and the third day I shall be perfected." (Luke 13:32.)

If then, even Jesus Christ did not regard himself as perfect while still in the flesh, it is plain that none other *can* be perfect until after the death of the physical man. We therefore know that this life is for us a progress towards perfection—toward absolute righteousness; but that we shall not reach this condition until we are released from the bonds of the flesh; until we are perfected in Christ and become one in him.

Then shall we be perfect, as Christ has commanded us: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." (Matthew 5:48.)

Yet, though because of the bond of the flesh, perfect righteousness is not possible to us here, still that righteousness which is by faith in Jesus Christ, and which has been mercifully ordained of God for men *is* possible to us.

For we can only have faith concerning those things which are not yet perfectly attained to. As Paul says in Hebrews 11:1, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." If then there was no further

righteousness to hope for, faith would not be possible, since faith can only exist concerning those things not yet entirely known or attained to.

Hence it is not possible that men should reach a condition of absolute righteousness here, since to do so would be to render faith impossible, while man is saved by faith.

If then our righteousness is through faith only, let us be mighty in faith in order that we may also here upon earth be mighty in righteousness. And though we cannot of ourselves have faith, let us even say to Christ as the apostles said, "increase our faith"; for Christ is both the beginner and finisher of our faith, and except as we know and acknowledge our own helplessness in the matter, Christ cannot help us, since we must first put ourselves into his hands.

As Paul says in Hebrews 12:2, "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith."

Let us therefore have that righteousness which is by faith, in order that we may also have eternal life, for to be righteous *is* eternal life.

As Paul also says in Romans 10:17, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

SECTION 10. In Luke 10:25 to 28 we find: "And behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

Power to love God and our neighbor comes to us, as to Christ, from the Spirit of God. Study of Christ's words necessary

"He said unto him what is written in the law? how readest thou?

"And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself.

"And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right; this do, and thou shalt live."

Here then we find it is eternal life,—to love the Lord with all thy heart, and soul, and strength, and mind, and thy neighbor as thyself.

"With all thy heart." That men are endowed with talents in different degree is apparent as we look around us and observe our fellows; so perhaps it is unnecessary to do more than refer to the parable of the talents, in which Christ makes this truth apparent, and also the related truth that we are rewarded according to the use we make of those talents which God gives us.

For instance, men's hearts differ; some men appear to be large-hearted naturally, and the

hearts of others to be of smaller make. We are not required to love God with as much power as some other larger-hearted man, for that would be beyond us; but with all *our* heart—with all the heart which God has given us.

"And with all thy soul." Some men's souls are a fertile soil for the growth of love, and when love has been planted there, it springs up into a mighty growth, a growth so large as to be a beacon-light among men.

The souls of others are rather a sterile soil, love seems to find here but a limited supply of food, and the plant therefore does not become so robust.

Now why does the plant love find here but a small supply of food?

Every plant in the physical world extracts certain chemical elements from the soil, from which the plant itself is built up. Different crops take different proportions of the different elements. Returning to the growth of the plant love in the soil of the human soul, it seems apparent that the particular elements which are necessary to nourish this plant, dwell in this sterile soil so sparingly that the plant remains half starved.

Now if any farmer had on his farm soil so poor in needed elements that he could not raise

the crops desired, what would he do? Why if he knew his business he would doubtless replace the needed elements in the soil by means of some fertilizer which contained those elements in abundance.

In seeking a fertilizer for a sterile soul that will give it the needed elements to abundantly nourish the plant love, we surely cannot do better than to search for the human soul which has in all time borne the most abundant fruitage from this plant,—the man Christ Jesus.

It is generally conceded even by those who are not believers that Jesus manifested love in his words and deeds more abundantly than any other man.

Was the soul of Jesus as a man naturally so rich of soil that love grew luxuriantly there, and brought forth fruit abundantly in loving deeds? We cannot do better than examine the testimony of Jesus himself regarding the matter.

He says: "I can of mine own self do nothing." This being so, it is evident that of his own self he could not do a loving deed, for that is a something of a very pronounced kind,—as every man must admit who has ever tried to force himself to a deed contrary to his nature.

Loving deeds cannot be brought forth from a soil in which love will not grow. Two men might do the same deed. With one it might be an act inspired by love, and with the other an act grudged, with many grumblings, in which no love was apparent.

Since the soul of Jesus, he being a man as we are, did not by nature contain this richness of the elements upon which love thrives, we may well imagine what his fertilizer was, and where he obtained it. It is plain that this fertilizer was the Spirit of God, and that he obtained it from God.

The Spirit of God supplies just precisely those elements on which the plant love thrives best in the human soul; and does not the Spirit of God enrich the human soul?

As a well-selected fertilizer manifests its presence by a more abundant crop of fruit, so the Spirit of God manifests its presence by a more abundant crop of loving deeds.

"By their fruits ye shall know them."

Since Christ obtained the Spirit of God from God himself, it is evident that we must go to the same source,—as John says, "and the Word was God."

Now even as a fertilizer must be hauled and spread over an impoverished field in order that all parts of the soil may be enriched, so also there is labor to be done ere the impoverished soul can be enriched by the Spirit of God, and that labor it is perhaps needless to say, must be done upon the word of God, in seeking the true meaning thereof.

This spiritual fertilizer, unlike the fertilizers of the physical world, is a living fertilizer, and grows from a seed—the true meaning of the word of God.

When the soil—the human soul—becomes so rich in needed elements on which good plants thrive, that it becomes identical with those elements, identical with that fertilizer, then that soul is indeed one in God: such a soul had the man Jesus.

It is manifestly true that every human soul must raise some kind of a crop, whether it be deeds of love, or deeds of hatred, deeds of generosity, or deeds of meanness. Many different deeds there are, both good and evil, but all of them are natural fruits of plants in the human soul.

It is a strange thing that in many souls a

plant of love toward some often grows side by side with a plant of hatred towards others, as the hill of corn grows beside the burdock, or the turnip beside the mullein.

Why should this be so? Since there is one plant, in the presence of which none of these weeds which absorb the nutriment from the soul can increase and grow luxuriant.

The presence of love for God renders the soul an inhospitable soil for all evil weeds, and all good plants thrive in its vicinity. It is plain that no matter how much a human soul may lack those elements which nourish plants of good, that the Spirit of God will, if applied to that soul, render it most rich in the very elements it lacks, and therefore most productive of good deeds.

Can any man be discouraged when he knows that there is an infinite supply of this Spirit, and that it is easily accessible? When he knows that the infinite Father greatly desires to give *him* this Spirit abundantly if he will only accept it, and that he has established a way in which he may accept it—through the word?

Here is a way, then, to so enrich the soul that love for God may grow therein with abundant luxuriance, and that we may come to love him

with all our soul. Then shall every good plant grow there also, for every good plant is, as it were, but a natural branch of this love for God, not a grafted, but a natural branch; thus shall we come to love our neighbor as ourselves.

As we have seen, the impoverished soul can be enriched. Now also we find that men are called large-hearted because love dwells in their hearts abundantly. To all small-hearted men this should be most encouraging, since it necessarily follows that even as the poorest of souls can be enriched, so also the smallest hearts can be enlarged.

Yes, God is able to deepen and enlarge our hearts so that they may hold love in abundance towards the Father and towards our neighbor. This process must doubtless be with suffering, but in contemplating the great heart of Christ there is healing. The more we contemplate it the larger our own will grow, for "all things are possible with God," and "the Word was God," and is.

"And with all thy strength." That men differ in strength or power to love God is as apparent as that they differ in physical strength, but of this we may be sure: that if we use what

strength we already have in loving God, in seeking him,—he is not only *able* to give unto us more strength, but he *will do so*. "Unto him that hath shall be given." If we have a little strength he will give unto us more strength.

Does not John the Baptist say concerning Christ: "For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him"? (John 3:34.)

If then God has given his Spirit to his Son without measure, by coming to Christ we may also receive strength without measure to love God and his righteousness; for the Spirit of God is strength, and without him there is no strength. Now this Spirit of God comes to us through Jesus Christ, even as Christ said: "No man cometh to the Father but by me," and "I am the vine, ye are the branches."

Yes, that same strength-giving and life-giving sap, the Spirit of God, that flowed through Christ, can give unto us strength to love God and our neighbor, even as it gave strength to Jesus to do so.

"And with all thy mind." All men also differ in their endowment of mental power, but the plain intent of the above phrase is that we should

use what mental power we already have, in seeking God and his righteousness, for in doing so would be manifested the fact that we loved him with all our mind.

God does not require impossibilities of us, but only that we should use what mind he has already given us in loving him,—in seeking him. If we do this he will surely grant unto us understanding.

Now the mind of the natural man is unable to understand the things of God, for this understanding comes through the Spirit of God only; but the mind of man is able to *seek* those things and to meditate upon them, and if we do this with what mental powers we have we may be sure that God will bless us with his Spirit, and that we will thereby understand these things.

What a blessed thing it is to think that no matter how great a man's education may be; though he may be a graduate of many colleges and have many degrees after his name, yet all these advantages will not profit him in the understanding of spiritual things except he love the Lord with his mind,—that is, seek him.

The very day-laborer who loves God with all his mind, who seeks to understand the things

of God with what mental powers he possesses, is better off spiritually than the man of many degrees who exercises but a part of his mind in loving God; but a part of his mental power in seeking him and meditating upon his righteousness.

How perfect is the justice of God; and what a comfort it ought to be to all of us to consider that our reward, our treasure, is not given with reference to what we have in the line of education, but with reference to the use we make of what we have.

If, then, we use all our mental powers in seeking God, in meditating upon those things which are of him, we shall fulfill this part of God's law: to love God with all our mind.

We must therefore love God, not only with every part of our being, but with *all* of every part.

And if we love God thus, must not this love manifest itself, make itself known that men may see it? Yes, whether we naturally have much or little heart, soul, strength and mind; if we love God thus, it will manifest itself in good works to all men. For if we love God thus, we will keep his commandment to love our neighbor as

ourselves. This love was the love which Christ manifested unto us, for Christ himself could have no greater love than this.

This love is a perfect love, as Christ has said: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." (Matt. 5:48.) There can be no love more perfect than a perfect love. Perfection is perfection and there is no further perfection beyond it. So Christ has manifested forth this perfect love to us, and is able now to manifest it forth *in* us, if we submit ourselves entirely to him.

His love must always be the same, now and evermore, and if we give ourselves wholly to him, he is able to enter into us, and occupy every part of our being with a perfect love. For he has said: "At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you." (John 14:20.)

If then, he be in us, he is able to be in us still more abundantly, until finally we shall be perfected in him, and there shall be no part of our being where he is not. We shall truly be his entirely, we in him, and he in us, in all possible fullness; as he says in John 15:4, "Abide in me, and I in you." And, as a further clue to how

this may be done, he says in the seventh verse, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."

Therefore if his words abide in us, we shall abide in him, and he will abide in us.

If his words abide in us sparingly, *he* will abide in us sparingly. If his words abide in us abundantly, *he* will abide in us abundantly.

He says: "Ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." As Jesus said when he raised Lazarus from the dead: "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me.

"And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me." (John 11:41, 42.) Even so shall we know that the Father hears *us* always, for he heareth always the Son, and the Son shall be in us at that perfect day in the greatest possible degree.

So to have in you this perfect love; to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and all thy soul, and all thy strength, and all thy mind, and thy neighbor as thyself is eternal life—complete eternal life.

Christ's disciple will forsake all that interposes between himself and God

SECTION 11. In John 12:25 we find, "He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal."

Now if a man have eternal life he must love the Lord and his righteousness above all other things, as is evidenced by Luke 14:33: "So likewise whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple."

Now for a man to forsake all that he has for something is clear proof that he loves that something more than he loves all that he has. In this case that something for love of which he forsakes all is God and his righteousness as represented in Jesus Christ.

Now we know that no man can come to God or know his righteousness save through Christ. "No man cometh unto the Father but by me." (John 14:6.) He that comes to God through Christ *is* a disciple of Christ. Hence, as I said at the beginning of this section, if a man have eternal life he must love the Lord and his righteousness above all other things.

Now there is but one obstruction which interposes between the man who has eternal life, and the Lord and his righteousness, and that obstruc-

tion is his existence in a material world. When he loses this sense of existence, his union and oneness with Christ, and through Christ with God is made perfect. "I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one." (John 17:23.)

How can a man love the very obstruction which keeps him from the dearest object of his affection,—the object that he places above all other things put together? Will he not rather hate it with strong hatred? Is it not that which keeps him from complete oneness with God and his righteousness—the one thing which prevents his will from becoming identical with God's will?

Yes, he that has eternal life must, indeed, not only hate life in a material sense, the life of, and in this world; but also all things in the world which interpose between him and God's righteousness.

Summary

SECTION 12. Now in summing up, we have Christ's word for it that it is eternal life:

1. To know God and Jesus Christ.

2. To labor for that meat which the Son of man gives unto us,—the meaning of the word.

3. To drink of the water that Christ gives us,—the word in its true meaning.

4. To eat the flesh and drink the blood of Christ,—or to eat of the living bread.

5. To have in you the commandment, or word, of God.

6. To hear Christ's word and believe on him that sent him.

7. To believe on Jesus Christ.

8. To keep Christ's saying.

9. To be righteous.

10. To love the Lord with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself.

11. To hate one's life in this world. (Because we love righteousness, and hate unrighteousness.)

To apply the test of truth to these sayings is not only allowable, but very desirable, since truth is not a thing which need fear investigation, but is rather confirmed and made stronger by it.

We have here eleven different things, any one of which Christ declares equivalent to eternal life. In order for these each to be equivalent to eternal life, they must all be in perfect harmony. If they do not harmonize, the presumption would be strong that we had either derived a wrong interpretation of some of them, or that these

declarations and words of Christ were not the truth.

On the other hand, if all these varying declarations of Christ agree together, then the presumption of their truth is vastly increased, even to the mind of the unbeliever; for truth must be in harmony with itself, and these doctrines would therefore fill that requirement.

The fact that the interpretations as given agree together in one, would also be a strong presumption that they were correctly given as far as they went.

We will take any one of these definitions of eternal life as,—to know God and Jesus Christ is eternal life, and ascertain if they all agree together with this. If they do, an exceedingly strong presumption is thereby derived, not only that the word of Christ is the truth, but that the interpretations are correct as far as given.

To labor for the meat that Christ gives us is to know God and Christ

SECTION 13. Let us take the second definition, —"to labor for that meat which the Son of man gives unto us is eternal life; and consider it with relation to the first,—"to know God and Jesus Christ is eternal life."

As we have previously seen, it is necessary that we labor, if we wish to obtain this meat

which Christ gives unto us; there is treasure here in the word of God, but it must first be dug out if we wish to make it our own.

That the invariable effect of labor spent on the word will be to make these treasures ours, is rendered evident by Matt. 7:8, "For everyone that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened."

If, then, we seek with diligence for that meat which endureth unto eternal life; if we labor for it, we shall find it. If we continue knocking with persistence at this door which leads to knowledge of God, this door will be opened to us, and we shall enter in, into a gradually increasing knowledge of God.

Thus we find that to labor for this meat is equivalent to obtaining it, and to obtain it is to know God and Jesus Christ; since the true Christ-given meaning of the word makes known both God and Christ to all men. Hence, to labor for that meat which the Son of man gives unto us—the true meaning of the word—and, to know God and Jesus Christ, agree together in one; both lead to eternal life; both are necessary to eternal life; by both we are led into a clearer

conception of the Christ-given meaning of eternal life.

To drink of the water that Christ gives us is to know God and Christ

SECTION 14. Third we have,—to drink of the water that Christ gives us—the word—is eternal life. Now knowledge of God and Christ is made known to man by the word of Christ, therefore he that drinks of this word, that absorbs it into himself, comes to know both God and Christ.

He that drinks sparingly of the true meaning of this word will be feeble in knowledge of God, and he that drinks abundantly will have abundant knowledge of God.

Therefore, to drink of the water that Christ gives us—the word—and, to know God and Jesus Christ, agree together, and both make more apparent to us what Christ means by eternal life. According as one drinks so will be his knowledge of both God and Christ.

To partake of Christ's flesh and blood is to know God and Christ

SECTION 15. Fourth,—to eat the flesh and drink the blood of Christ, or to eat of the living bread is eternal life. He that eats the flesh—the word—and drinks the blood—the Spirit—of Christ, or eats of the living bread—the true meaning of the word,—will thereby know both God and Christ, since both are in the word made known to man. If the word becomes part of us

spiritually, as the bodily nourishment we eat becomes part of us physically, so also will knowledge of both God and Christ be in us.

Thus we find that to know God and Jesus Christ, and to eat the flesh and drink the blood of Christ, or to eat of the living bread, also agree together, both helping to make plainer Christ's meaning of eternal life.

To have in us the word of God is to know God and Christ

SECTION 16. Fifth,—to have in you the commandment, or word, of God is eternal life.

It is logically apparent that he who has in him the commandment, or word, of God, in its true meaning, must know God and Jesus Christ; since both are through the word made known to man.

It is clear also, that he who has in him but a part of the true meaning of the word, can have but a partial knowledge of God and Christ; that as the true meaning of the word increases within him, so also must knowledge of God and Christ increase within him, until finally when the commandment of God is in him perfected, his knowledge of God and Christ must also be perfected. "For we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." "For

now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known." (I Cor. 13: 9, 10, 12.)

We thus see the constant and intimate relation existing between the commandment of God in us, and knowledge of God and Jesus Christ in us.

We find therefore that these two definitions of eternal life are in perfect harmony with each other.

To hear Christ's word and believe on him that sent him, is to know God and Christ

SECTION 17. Sixth, to hear Christ's word and believe on him that sent him is eternal life.

As we have seen (Section 6), the necessary relation existing between the hearing of Christ's word and the believing on him that sent him, indicates that the believing is to be the result of the hearing.

Now we must all admit that for a man to hear anything without understanding it in some degree, profits him nothing. The profit lies in the understanding, for the words themselves are only so many dry bones, being but symbols standing in the place of meaning. Accordingly if the meaning be not in some degree understood, the hearing is profitless.

In this case, however, the hearing is followed

by believing on him that sent him, the result of both being eternal life. This could by no means be called profitless, but rather profitable in the highest degree; therefore the hearing of Christ's word here spoken of must be a hearing accompanied by understanding.

This being the case, both God and Christ must in some degree be made known to the hearer. Hence to hear Christ's word and believe on him that sent him, and to know God and Jesus Christ, are perfectly harmonious and present different views of the same thing,—eternal life.

To believe on Jesus Christ is to know God and Christ

SECTION 18. Seventh, to believe on Jesus Christ is eternal life.

It is very apparent that for a person to believe on anything, he must first be acquainted with it, or know it in some satisfactory degree. For how can a man believe on a thing of which he has no knowledge? How can a man accept that of which he is ignorant?

How could you, for instance, have a well-grounded belief that Mr. X, a man totally unknown to you and your friends, was entirely honest, when you knew nothing of him from any source?

Then, since it is impossible for one to have

a logical belief in regard to anything without some knowledge of that thing, it naturally follows that any man who believes on Jesus Christ must therefore know him in some satisfactory degree, and he who knows Christ knows God as well,—"I and my Father are one" (John 10:30); and "If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also." (John 14:7.)

Hence he who believes on Jesus Christ must therefore know both God and Christ. These two things thus agree, and each helps to make plainer that fullness of meaning which Christ intended the words eternal life should bear.

To keep Christ's saying is to know God and Christ

SECTION 19. Eighth, to keep Christ's saying is eternal life.

He that keeps Christ's saying must first know the saying before he can keep it; and he that knows Christ's saying and keeps it, also knows both God and Christ, since both are thereby made known to man.

We find that a knowledge of the saying, and consequently a knowledge of both God and Christ, must precede the keeping of it. There is thus an intimate and harmonious connection between the two, and by means of both our

understanding of eternal life is rendered more complete.

To be righteous is to know God and Christ

SECTION 20. Ninth, to be righteous is eternal life.

Now we know that the righteousness of God is as far above the righteousness of man as the heavens are above the earth.

When Christ speaks of being righteous he surely means the highest kind of righteousness; that perfect righteousness which is of God, which he himself possessed. We know that no man has ever attained to this perfect righteousness, while in the form of man, save Jesus Christ only.

In section nine, we found that complete realization destroys the existence of faith, since faith is in regard to things hoped for, and if there was nothing left to be hoped for, faith could not exist.

In regard to knowledge of God, for instance, we have faith that we shall come to know, even as we are known. Paul says, "Now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known." (I Cor. 13: 12.) Now God knows us perfectly, and in order to realize this object of faith, we must also come to know him perfectly, in his character; when however we do come to

know God perfectly, further faith on this subject becomes impossible, since faith disappears in perfect knowledge.

We see on the other hand, that faith in God without any knowledge of him is equally impossible, for how can one believe or have faith in that of which he knows nothing?

We see plainly that *some* knowledge of the object of faith is necessary in order for faith to exist. Furthermore we cannot fail to see that as our knowledge of God is imperfect, so also our faith in God must be imperfect; that as our knowledge of God is abundant, so must our faith in God be abundant; that as our knowledge of God increases, our faith in God also increases, until as our knowledge of God (in respect to the quality of Being), becomes perfect, our faith in God also becomes perfect: that is our faith becomes merged in perfect knowledge.

Going back to the matter of righteousness, even as our faith in God increases proportionally with our knowledge of God, so also does our righteousness increase proportionally with our knowledge of God, since our righteousness on earth is by faith. As Paul says, "Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus

Christ unto all and upon all them that believe." Let it be noted that if the faith of Jesus Christ be a perfect faith, his knowledge also is a perfect knowledge. "As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father." (John 10:15.)

At that time, then, when a perfect righteousness is attained to, must also a perfect knowledge of God (his character, rather than his infinity) be attained to; and if a perfect knowledge of God, a perfect knowledge of Christ also, since we come to know God through Christ. "No man cometh unto the Father but by me." (John 14:6.) "I and my Father are one." (John 10:30.)

Therefore we find that, to be righteous is eternal life, and to know God and Jesus Christ is eternal life, agree together.

To love God and our neighbor is to know God and Christ

SECTION 21. Tenth, to love God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself is eternal life.

In order to love anyone it is first necessary that we should be acquainted with, or know him in some degree. One could not love a person whom he neither knew nor knew of. Some knowledge then of God and his character is

absolutely necessary before we can love him at all.

If our knowledge of him be small, our love for him must necessarily be small; if our knowledge of him be great, our love for him must be correspondingly great, since God is perfect.

If our knowledge of God be a perfect knowledge, our love for him must be a correspondingly perfect love, and we shall love him with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our strength, and with all our mind.

Now, having the power to keep the first and great commandment perfectly, must carry with it the power to love our neighbor as ourselves, for obedience to this first and great commandment implies perfection. If we possess the power to love God with a perfect love, we must possess the will to obey all his commandments. "If a man love me, he will keep my words." (John 14:23.)

We find therefore that there is, and necessarily must be, a constant relation between our knowledge of God and Christ,—for we have seen that we can only know God through Christ, —and our love for God and our neighbor: that both agree, and give us a fuller idea of the meaning of eternal life.

To hate an unspiritual life is to know God and Christ

SECTION 22. Eleventh,—to hate one's life in this world is eternal life.

As we have previously seen, to know God, to comprehend merely the motives of his action, we must partake of his nature. That Spirit which is in him must also be in us.

If now, that Spirit which is in him be in us, we will love, not the things which are of this world, but the things which pertain to God and his righteousness. Contrariwise, we will hate those things which keep us from the righteousness of God; and our life in this world,—considered as material existence,—comprises those things.

As we have seen that our love for God and our knowledge of him are proportional to each other, so also our love for God and our hatred for our lives in this world may be said to be proportional.

There are however other elements which apparently enter into this matter, it being evident that a disciple of Christ who lives surrounded by wickedness and sin of pronounced character, must hate his life more than one who lives more secluded from the wickedness of the world, and whose associates are of the same spiritual mind with himself.

However it would be well to bear in mind that such a disciple as the one first mentioned may have placed himself in those wicked surroundings designedly, urged on by his love for God and his consequent desire to do God's work. Every disciple has work to do, but it is perhaps not the duty of everyone to go out into the world to do it. Some may do it best at home and among their own associates.

But it is logically apparent that he who knows God and Jesus Christ will hate his life in this world in proportion as it is in opposition to the perfect spiritual life. All life in this world (considered as material existence) is in opposition to perfect spiritual life, but in some cases especially so. It is clear that while the degree of our hatred for our lives in this world is largely determined by the degree of contrast offered between our lives here, and the perfect Christian or spiritual life; while it is plain that this contrast varies somewhat in intensity as between different men, yet it is also plain that there does exist a pronounced contrast in the case of everyone, and that there should consequently exist in the case of everyone this hatred of his life in this world, conditioned as a material existence.

So also the degree of pain produced in us by the contemplation of the wickedness and sin which is not only around us all, but in some measure in us all, and consequently the degree of our hatred for our lives in this world, is largely determined by, and is proportional to, our knowledge of God and his perfect righteousness. Thus it is logically true that he who knows God and Jesus Christ must hate his life considered as a thing of this world.

Hence we find that, to know God and Jesus Christ, and to hate one's life in this world, agree together and make plainer to us what eternal life is.

Complete harmony of all these definitions is a proof of truth

SECTION 23. All these different conceptions of eternal life agree together in one with the statement that to know God and Jesus Christ is eternal life, showing us that these are not different conceptions, but different faces of the same conception,—that they are merely different parts of one and the same thing, eternal life.

Complete eternal life therefore includes all these things.

These different definitions not only agree with the first definition that to know God and Jesus Christ is eternal life, but are also in perfect

harmony with each other. Each one agrees with every other one.

As we know that truth must be in harmony with itself, and as we have seen in part that this harmony exists here, so we will by further investigation seek to discover a complete harmony; to make evident that here we have by correct interpretation an invulnerable network of truth.

In respect to definitions 2, 3, 4, and 5, as given in the preceding list in Section 12, it is self-evident that in view of the interpretations placed upon them, they are not only harmonious with, but equivalent to each other.

For, the fourth,—to eat the flesh and drink the blood of Christ (to read the word and absorb the spirit of Christ), or, to eat of the living bread (to absorb the true meaning of the word), is in both parts plainly equivalent to the third definition,—drinking of the water that Christ gives us (the word in its true meaning.)

These two in turn are equivalent to the second definition,—to labor for that meat which the Son of man gives us, this meat being the true meaning of the word. We are told that if we seek we shall find, therefore to labor for this meat is to obtain it.

All these definitions are equivalent to the fifth, —having in them the commandment, or word, of God. To have the commandment at all they must have it in its real meaning, and this is also the result of the second, third and fourth definitions.

The sixth definition,—to hear Christ's word and believe on him that sent him is in harmony with the fifth, since to hear Christ's word is equivalent to hearing the word or commandment of God; and to believe on God by hearing the word, presupposes the understanding of its true meaning.

The sixth definition is equivalent to the seventh,—believing on Jesus Christ, for does not Christ say, "He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me"? (John 12:44.)

The eighth definition,—to keep Christ's saying is eternal life, is in perfect harmony with the seventh, since it is apparent that none will keep Christ's saying, save those who *do* believe on him.

Now the ninth,—to be righteous is eternal life, —is equivalent to the eighth, since Christ's saying is the commandment of God, and he that keeps this commandment of God is righteous.

The tenth definition,—to love the Lord with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbor as thyself,—is also equivalent to the ninth; since Christ says respecting the two commandments included under definition ten, "On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." (Matt. 22:40.) Now he that fulfills all the law *is* righteous.

Definition eleven,—to hate one's life in this world (considered as material existence, from a spiritual point of view) is eternal life, is also in perfect harmony with the tenth definition, since he that loves God thus will necessarily hate his life in this world, since this life interposes in his consciousness between him and the object of his greatest affection.

Enough has been said to show the perfect harmony of all these different definitions of eternal life.

Furthermore it is apparent that they all must harmonize in every respect when taken in their proper meaning, since they are all in harmony with definition one,—to know God and Jesus Christ is eternal life, and since it is evident that definitions in harmony with the same definition must agree with each other.

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Thus we see that each strand of this network of truth supports and renders stronger every other strand, and that there is perfect harmony throughout.

The irresistible force of this will appear much greater if we go back and reflect from how many different forms of words we derived these varying definitions of eternal life: "everlasting life," "eternal life," "shall never see death," and "shall live forever."

There is here an agreement of things mentioned under different forms of words, but having the same significance, an agreement so complete and perfect as to set the seal of God's Spirit upon it.

God's gift to us—eternal life, through re-birth and growth in Christ must be accepted

SECTION 24. There are also other ideas included in the conception of eternal life, as in John 10: 10, we find, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."

We know that the kind of life which Christ came to give men is spiritual—eternal—life. We learn from this verse that this life is of a kind which men do not by nature possess, since he says, "I am come that they might have life."

It is plain that Christ considered mankind as

spiritually dead by nature, since if it were not so, there would have existed no necessity for his coming with the direct object of giving them this spiritual life, nor any necessity for their being born again.

Then he goes on to say, "and that they might have it more abundantly." After implying that men do *not* by nature have this kind of life, he says that he came to bring them more of it, thereby implying that they *do* have it.

How shall we reconcile this seeming contradiction?

There is but one conclusion possible, which is that mankind by nature is devoid of any spiritual life whatever; that if men individually do possess some of this life, it is because of the infinite mercy of God, who gave it to them, since by their nature as men they do not possess it.

With respect to the physical world it is apparent that the physical embryo before birth cannot be truly said to live, since it possesses no separate entity, and since its life is entirely dependent on the life of the parent. What life it has is more the property of the parent than of the embryo, and remains so until birth is complete.

So it is with spiritual life. As the life of the physical embryo does not become its own till its birth into the physical world is complete, so also the life of the spiritual embryo does not become its own until its entrance into the spiritual world is complete.

When Christ says, "I am come that they might have life," it is apparent he means that they must be born again ere they can possess this life.

When he says, "and that they might have it more abundantly," it is clear he means thereby that they who have unborn spiritual life may have it more abundantly; that is that they may be born again and thus themselves possess a more abundant measure of that spiritual life which was before, not their own but the heavenly Father's.

We find in John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Here again we have everlasting life the same as eternal life. Here we see that God gave his only begotten Son for this purpose. Eternal life is therefore a free gift of God to us,—a free gift of God through his Son.

In John 10:27, 28, we find, "My sheep hear

my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life." We learn here that eternal life is not only the gift of God to us, but that it is the gift of Christ to us as well. Thus are we enabled not only to appreciate that it is a free gift to us, that this is the manner in which we obtain it, that we have but to accept this gift in order to receive all the manifold blessings of eternal life; but we are also enabled to understand better the truth of the fact that God and Christ are one.

We find here also the thought that eternal life being a gift, must like any other gift be accepted or rejected. That we do not by virtue of our birth into the kingdom of men, possess eternal life, but by virtue of our acceptance of the privilege of being born again into the kingdom of God.

Some eminent minister has recently said that man by virtue of his birth *as* man, has in him a divine spark, which cannot be buried. Perhaps not, but could it not be taken back to God who lent it, and leave the unprofitable servant destitute of eternal life? "And whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have." (Luke 8:18.)

It is clear that we must accept this gift, ere we can have eternal,—spiritual,—life.

Our incomplete eternal life here

SECTION 25. Eternal life must unquestionably be perfect, whether we have it here, or hereafter; but by no means in the first case necessarily complete, since while we are here, eternal life cannot possess us completely. Our being, as it were, is divided between spiritual life, and the life of the flesh; even as Paul says, "the carnal mind is enmity against God." (Romans 8:7.)

Yet it is plain to be seen that we cannot be completely separated from the mind of the flesh, while we dwell in the flesh, though with the aid of Christ we can approach close to it; and could we overcome the obstacle of the flesh sufficiently to submit ourselves entirely to Christ, the result must doubtless be a perfectly spiritual mind, as in the case of Christ.

In Section 21 we find that there exists a constant relation between our knowledge of God and our love for God. As the one increases, the other necessarily keeps pace with it.

Now we find in Section 11 that to be a disciple of Christ, a man must love God and his righteousness more than all other things put together. We find that all who come to God

must come through Christ; that all who really come through Christ are disciples of Christ; and that all true disciples of Christ have entered the process of re-birth, at least embryonic re-birth, and therefore have some measure of eternal life.

As was said before, our love for God keeps pace, step by step, with our knowledge of him. If our love for God must reach a certain point before we can be true disciples of Christ, or be born again so as to be true children of God; so also our knowledge of God must reach a corresponding point at the same time.

The point of birth into a true child of God is that at which our love for God and his righteousness is greater than our love for all other things whatsoever, and I call to your attention that the corresponding point in regard to knowledge of God must therefore indicate a knowledge of God quite advanced.

These two points denote those at which men become true sons of God. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." (Romans 8: 14.) We may be sure that any who have reached these points will never backslide, or be overcome of the world, but will

be upheld by the power of God. "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world." (I John 5:4.)

Whosoever therefore has doubts as to whether he loves God and his righteousness more than all other things, may well also have doubts as to whether he is a true child of God. He need however have no doubt whatever, that with continued diligence in seeking God, his love for God and his righteousness will increase to this point, which when it reaches, Christ shall be revealed to him with such power that he will truly believe on him with a belief such as Christ speaks of,—a belief unto eternal life.

Now since the things of God are discerned by the Spirit of God only,—"For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God," (I Cor. 2:11)—no man need be troubled that he is without learning, neither encouraged because he has it. For we know that learning in this case avails nothing, but rather that we should be as little children, anxious to learn of God, and willing to acknowledge that as men we know nothing of him as we ought. "Verily I say unto you,

Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein." (Mark 10:15.) And surely we shall receive it as little children if we feel that we know nothing as yet concerning God, as we ought to know it, and if we labor diligently and without ceasing to learn of him.

Perhaps most people in civilized lands know in a way, that God is just, merciful and holy, all wise, all powerful; and that he loves all mankind with a mighty love; but their *comprehension* of these qualities in him is generally very inadequate. As we have seen, to know means to comprehend. And we know that if we labor for this understanding, God will bless our labor, and give unto us his Spirit,—by means of which only is understanding of these things possible,—according *as* we labor.

Let us take a short look at that complete eternal life which shall be ours in due time, in order that we may not faint, nor grow weary, but may labor abundantly in this glorious hope.

Complete eternal life

SECTION 26. As we have seen that in a complete eternal life our knowledge of God and Christ will be perfect, so also our belief in Jesus Christ will be perfect,—that is will merge into

perfect knowledge of him. Our love for God will be a perfect love,—that is will occupy all of every part of our being, leaving no room for any other love whatever, except such as results because of it; as, to love our neighbor as ourselves, which is after all but the expression of God's love in us toward others.

Further, in this complete eternal life the commandment of God will in us be perfected,—that is will dwell in us in all complete and possible fullness.

We shall then keep Christ's saying perfectly, and consequently be perfectly righteous.

Our will must therefore also be perfected so as to be identical with, and even as God's will; and as Christ has informed us in the Lord's prayer that God's will is always done in heaven, so also must our wills always be accomplished there. Furthermore, we shall comprehend perfectly God's mighty love for us, and it will fill us with joy. What sources of perfect happiness are here!

Paul says, "For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. For now we see through a glass

darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known." (I Cor. 13:9, 10, 12.)

Christ's analogies intended to have only a spiritual application

SECTION 27. Now Christ has by the many instances mentioned in different parts of his Gospel regarding the generation and maintenance of spiritual life:—by eating his flesh and drinking his blood (John 6:54); by eating the bread of life (John 6:58); by his reference to the meat which endureth unto everlasting life (John 6:27); and by his reference to the water of life (John 4:14), thereby drawn a plain analogy between the processes of generating and maintaining physical life, and those processes with reference to the spiritual life. We cannot doubt that he intended this analogy to be carried out in full, or he would not have used it.

Unquestionably he used this mode of expression as the best means of making himself plainly understood, since all mankind are most accustomed to regarding things from a material and physical viewpoint, and he has therefore adjusted his explanations of spiritual generation and growth to this point of view; at the same time by other statements making plain to us that he intended these things to be taken spiritually,

as: "It is the spirit that quickeneth";—causes to live spiritually—"the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, *they* are spirit, and *they* are life." (John 6:63.)

This verse occurs in the latter part of the same chapter in which three of the above references occur, and is unquestionably in further explanation of those references. If, then, it be true that, "It is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing," then it must follow that the meaning of "flesh and blood" in the saying, "Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life, is a spiritual meaning only; for if it did, as some believe, apply to the physical flesh and blood of Christ, or to the bread and wine of the sacrament, then would it be a material application and not a spiritual one, for these are all material things. Hence if "the flesh profiteth nothing," none of these things can be a cause of possessing "eternal life," since eternal life profits much.

If, then it be true that this sacrament of the Church—the Lord's Supper—is other than a symbolical ceremony, then are the words of Christ untrue, for he says, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." (John 3:6.)

No man can deny that the spirit of the believer is quickened during the administration of the sacrament, but that this quickening is not due to the bread and the wine is clear.

The gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke agree substantially in their account of the Lord's Supper: he blesses the bread and gives to them as his body; takes the wine, gives thanks, and bids them drink of it as his blood of the new testament, shed for them.

If we consider what possible interpretations might be made of this, we shall find four,—the body and blood of Christ may be taken to mean:

1. The spiritual body and blood of Christ;
2. The physical body and blood of Christ;
3. That the bread and wine were intended by Christ to *represent* his spiritual body and blood;
4. That the bread and the wine were intended to *represent* his physical body and blood.

Suppose, as in the first instance, that we take the bread and wine to be actually the spiritual body and blood of Christ. But we know that this bread and wine are of themselves material things, and being so, cannot at the same time actually be spiritual.

Here some may say,—How about the Bible?

Is not that at the same time a book and also the word of God? The book, to be sure, is always a material thing at all times. But when the meaning of the printed book becomes impressed on the human consciousness, it is a spiritual thing, and is not then a printed book. The very words of the Bible are but symbols standing in place of meanings; and these meanings impressed on the human consciousness are spiritual, while the symbols themselves are material things.

By science—the experience of men—and by ordinary reason, we know that one thing cannot at the same time be another thing.

We also know it by the word of Christ, since he says, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit," which is equivalent to saying that material things cannot either generate or renew spiritual life. And here let it be said that if to some the Bible seems to generate or renew spiritually, they should remember that it is only the Spirit of God which makes known the things of God: so that if the true meaning of any part of the Bible is impressed on our consciousness, this impression which renews us spiritually is the work of the Holy Spirit.

Hence this first position is untenable and we will dismiss it from consideration.

Second, we will suppose the bread and wine to be actually the physical body and blood of Christ.

If this supposition be true, then the bread and the wine being actually the physical body and blood of Christ can in no way renew us spiritually. Why so? Because, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." This being true, not even the physical flesh and blood of Jesus himself will avail to give us spiritual life, and Christ himself testifies that this is true.

Therefore we may dismiss the second supposition as untenable also.

We will take the third supposition,—that the bread and wine were intended by Christ to merely represent his spiritual body and blood. If they merely *represent* and actually *are* not his spiritual body and blood, they do not fulfill the conditions necessary to give eternal life, for Christ has said, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life."

On the supposition we are considering, how-

ever, the bread and the wine are not actually the body and the blood, but merely *represent* them, and hence cannot give eternal life, not *being* themselves the source of it.

Therefore we are obliged to dismiss this third supposition also, since eternal life is not thereby to be had.

Now, considering the fourth supposition, that the bread and the wine are intended merely to *represent* his physical body and blood, we find that if the actual physical body and blood of Christ cannot give to us eternal life, the mere representatives are still less able to do so.

This brings us to the conclusion that the saying, "Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life," does not apply to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper at all, but rather to the word of Christ, that is to its true meaning impressed on our consciousness,—as is evidenced by John 1 : 14, "And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us."

It also brings us to the conclusion that in the bread and wine of the sacrament there is no eternal life whatever. The Lord's Supper then is but a symbolical ceremony, calculated to bring home to our consciousness with striking force

the great sacrifice of Christ for our sakes,—to make apparent to us how great his love toward us must have been. Now since it is true that love begets love, that the realization that we are much loved begets in us a like feeling toward him who loves us, the practical utility of the Lord's Supper is clear, as it brings home to us the love of Christ, thereby generating in us a like feeling toward him, and toward the Father who sent him to endure all this for our sakes.

If there are those who would urge Christ's words concerning the bread and wine: "This is my body," and "This is my blood"; we reply that many of Christ's sayings can only be interpreted by reference to his other words, and only by this harmonizing of all his words are we able to come into a correct understanding of some of the things he says.

In Luke 14:26 we read, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple."

If we were to interpret this literally, as some interpret the sayings with reference to the Lord's Supper, it would lead us into the error of thinking that a man acquired merit by hating his

father and his mother; but the Jesus who told us to "love our enemies" could not mean that we should hate our friends and relatives, though he apparently says so as clearly as could well be.

This verse then to be correctly interpreted must be brought into perfect harmony with that other saying, "Love your enemies." We can interpret it harmoniously if we hold it to mean that we must hate the spirit of this world which is in our father and mother;—yes, and in ourselves also. What Christ really says here is that we must hate all things which interfere to keep us from God and from doing his work, as he himself said to Peter, his chief apostle, "Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." (Matt. 16:23.) For Peter sought to restrain Jesus from doing the work which God had appointed him to do. Did not Jesus hate Satan? Yes, even though this evil spirit manifested itself in one of his best friends.

We cannot, then, interpret Christ's words regarding the bread and wine literally, and use the human reason which God has given us to use. In another sense, however, we find that these words of Jesus are true; for while we do not

partake of the body and blood of Jesus in partaking of the Lord's Supper, yet we do partake of his spiritual body, if believing on him as the Son of God who sacrificed himself for us, we feel our love kindling toward him. In loving that which is good we have in us the Spirit of Christ himself.

If we then in taking part in this sacrament, by the force with which it brings home to us the love of Jesus for us, also experience an increased love for him, in partaking of this Spirit of love, we do partake of the body and blood of Christ, since Christ is a Spirit, a Spirit not only of obedience to righteousness, but a Spirit of sacrifice for the soul welfare of others.

John the beloved says, "God is love," and Jesus says, "I and my Father are one." Jesus must therefore have referred to the kindling of love for him in the heart of the disciple which doing this in remembrance of Christ, as he commanded, must produce.

If a deaf man who had never heard the Gospel or read the Bible, should come into church and join the people at the Communion table in partaking of the bread and wine, it is perfectly clear that it could profit him nothing. Or if a man

familiar with the Gospel, but not believing in Jesus' sacrifice for our sakes, should take part in the Communion, because everyone else did; it is evident that he would receive no benefit. There is no eternal life in the bread, or in the wine, either for him or for anyone else.

Where then is the eternal life? In knowing Christ—in realizing the spirit in which Jesus sacrificed his life. We must realize this spirit, if we believe on him and understand that he gave his life for our sakes; for this in itself shows us that he must have done it in a spirit of love for us. This understanding is not only of the mind, but of the heart, and apart from it, there can be no eternal life in the Lord's Supper for anyone.

Now this heart comprehension comes to us by the word of God. It is a logical conclusion then, that there is no eternal life which does not come from the word of God, as Jesus says, "the words that I speak unto you, *they* are spirit and *they* are life."

Whether we speak of the "Word of God" as the words which Jesus spoke, impressed on our consciousness and heart in their intended meaning; or speak of it as Christ,—that is the Spirit

in which they were spoken, is all one: since it is clear that an understanding of the intended meaning of Christ's words generates in us the Spirit in which they were spoken.

Meaning impressed on consciousness and heart *is* spirit. If you are told that some man hates you, and the words or incident related which lead to that conclusion; if you have not Christ already in you, it must inevitably follow that when this becomes impressed on your consciousness, when you realize it, a spirit of hatred for this man will rise in you. Likewise when the words of Christ in their intended meaning become impressed on your consciousness and heart, when they are realized, the Spirit of Christ rises in you—is born in you it may be.

"Ye must be born again." (John 3:7.) Eternal life comes only through the Word of God. Remember that Jesus says, "God is a Spirit," and that John says, "and the Word was God." A knowledge of the fact that the bread and wine of the sacrament do not in themselves contain eternal life is of the greatest value, since it leads us to the fact that eternal life comes only by knowing the words of God in their true meaning,—that is by having the Spirit

of God which is identical with knowing God. "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." "I and my Father are one."

In conclusion the value of the Lord's Supper cannot be denied,—for we know God, and as a result have eternal life, not by mental apprehension alone, but by the addition of what may be called heart comprehension.

Christ's meaning obtained by carrying his analogies out in full

SECTION 28. We have found in the foregoing section that the analogies drawn by Christ between the processes of generating and maintaining physical, and those processes as regards the spiritual life, are intended to apply solely in a spiritual sense.

We must carry these analogies out in full in order to get Christ's meaning. Let us consider the mystery of physical generation, and its maintenance and growth. We know that physical life comes from preceding physical life.

The greatest spiritual authority who ever lived as a man, informs us that this law which operates without variation in the physical world, also operates without variation in the spiritual world. We learn from him that spiritual life is generated from preceding spiritual life, and that our

spiritual life depends upon that spiritual life which is in Christ, and which comes through Christ to us. "The words that I speak unto you; *they* are spirit and *they* are life."

Here let it be observed that Christ spoke all his words with a certain meaning, and it is evident that we must obtain something of this true Christ-given meaning ere these words become spirit and life to us.

As we know that in the propagation of physical life, a seed wherein physical life exists, is the base of every living physical organism; so we also know that in the propagation of spiritual or eternal life, a seed wherein spiritual life exists, is the base of all organisms possessing spiritual life, and we have Christ's own word for it as to what this seed is,—"The seed is the word of God." (Luke 8:2.)

If the word of Christ quoted here be true, there can be no other kind of seed which will raise this crop, because two varieties of seed will not produce the same thing. The seed being different, the crop must also be different.

Now the consciousness of the natural man is but the soil in which the seed of eternal life is sown, and contains in itself no spiritual life what-

ever, nor can it, except this seed be sown in it. "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man [the word], and drink his blood [the Spirit], ye have no life in you." (John 6: 53.)

After physical life is generated it must be maintained by being fed. The yet unborn physical organism must be fed sufficiently, in order that its life may be maintained, that it may grow, that it may be born, in fact. The life of the unborn physical organism depends wholly upon being sufficiently fed. Likewise the life of the yet unborn spiritual organism depends wholly upon being sufficiently fed.

Jesus said to Nicodemus, "Ye must be born again." Regarded in this light, the spiritual organism is a re-birth, or birth again. Man is born once into this world consciousness, the spirit of this world, and must be re-born of the Spirit of God. So we see that the man is re-born in this sense, when the Spirit of God taking up its abode in him begins for him existence in another world—the kingdom of God. His consciousness and heart hitherto welded to the spirit of this world, which occupies itself with the things of this material world,—the things of sense, begins to become welded to the Spirit of God, which

occupies itself with the things of the unseen world,—the things of spirit. As Paul says, "While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." (II Cor. 4:18.)

We are justified then in saying that a man is born again who has received the Spirit of God—the Holy Ghost; knowing that, as John says, "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world" (I John 5:4; and that the welding process once begun must be completed—that welding process which begins when a man receives the Spirit of God, and which is finished when he becomes one in that Spirit. "I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one." (John 17:23.)

According to this view, a man would be born again on receiving the Spirit of God; then there would be a period of growth, a coming to maturity as it were,—which would be represented by the time between the gift of the Holy Ghost and the becoming wholly one with that gift. The fullness of spiritual growth can be none other than perfect oneness with Christ,—with God.

As we know that there is no end of the spiritual world, we cannot carry the analogy of spiritual things with physical any further than we have,—the birth of the spiritual organism, and its growth and coming to maturity; for with *this* spiritual organism there can be no death, since this is born of God. The maturity of the organism which is born of God is life—eternal life.

The point of view which we have just considered—that a man is born again who has received the gift of the Holy Spirit—we might properly call the "man point of view." There is yet another point of view from which we ought to consider this matter, since both these points of view are necessary to a harmonizing and an understanding of much that we find in the New Testament. The second point of view we may justly call the "God point of view." This point of view is that God—in Christ—takes up his abode in us and grows in us until our whole nature *is* Him; that we are, in our poor human nature, but the soil and Christ the seed.

Both these points are not only made manifest, but proven by the following verses: "We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not."

(I John 5:18); "Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him." (I John 3:6.)

Now we know that John had received the gift of the Holy Ghost when Jesus breathed on his apostles and said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." (John 20:22.) We know, in other words, that he had been born again of the Spirit.

John says, "We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not," and this leads us to the conclusion that John after having been born again by receiving the Holy Ghost never thereafter sinned. But John also says, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." (I John 1:8.) By this we see that John includes himself with those in whom sin exists as a present possession. We may recall here the prayer of Solomon at the consecration of the temple, "for there is no man that sinneth not," and the harmonious saying of Jesus, "there is none good but one, that is, God." (Matt. 19:17.)

The truth of these things cannot be denied. Though a man may in one sense be born again, having the gift of the Holy Ghost, and though he will not live in sin, yet he will sin at times. Now

we know, also, that "Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not," and, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin." We know that Jesus never sinned and that God could never beget one who sinned, for, as John says, "He that committeth sin is of the devil." (I John 3:8.)

Can both these points of view be true? Yes, for while in one sense a man cannot be born again who sins, in another sense he is unquestionably born again, even though he may sin at times. As we have seen from what we called the "man point of view," a man is born again when he receives the Holy Spirit. But from the "God point of view" he cannot be born again until entirely freed from sin. For, "whosoever is born of God sinneth not." From this point of view, therefore, a man is not born again until he is perfected in Christ, which obviously does not occur during his life here.

So while we are in one sense born again when we receive Christ, yet in another sense we are not born again until Christ has done his work in us and fully freed us from sin. We are inevitably bound to be born again at some future time in the latter sense, if we have been born again in the first sense—if we have received Christ.

A man then can become a son of God only when freed from sin, when perfected and made wholly one with Christ, who is one with God. It is apparent, therefore, that from the last mentioned point of view—that of the perfect Father—the Christ who is born in a man must be regarded as in a sense separate and apart from the man himself; and yet at the same time one with the man in so far as the man lives in that spirit, because, as John says, "whosoever is born of God sinneth not."

We must be spiritually fed by Christ; we must exercise our spiritual strength by doing the will of God

SECTION 29. Carrying out the analogy which Jesus has given us, we see that as the birth of the physical organism depends upon being sufficiently fed, so the birth of the spiritual organism, Christ in us, depends upon being sufficiently fed. And as the physical organism must be fed sufficiently in order to attain to maturity—to the fullness of its physical powers—so must the spiritual organism be fed sufficiently to attain to the fullness of spiritual powers of which the Christ in us is capable.

After birth, growth. It is possible for the physical organism to die for lack of food after being born; but the Christ in man, once born, knows the source of supply of spiritual food.

This spiritual organism, therefore, is immortal, but like the physical body, may attain a greater or less fullness of power within the span of an earthly existence, according to whether it receives sufficient food, and sufficient exercise of the spiritual strength gained from that food.

In regard to the food of this spiritual organism, it is God, for Christ says in John 6:57, "As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father." He then adds, "so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me," and here let us remember what John says, "and the word was God"; also Christ's saying, "I and my Father are one."

The physical man must not only have sufficient food, but sufficient exercise in order to assimilate that food and reach the full strength of which he is capable. Repairs go on more rapidly when muscles are used, and the parts of worn-out tissue then replaced are built, not back into the softer form of unused muscle, but into the harder form of muscle in action. Thus the physical body becomes great and powerful.

By the application of this natural law to the spiritual organism, as Jesus has authorized us to do in his analogies, we draw the conclusion

that the power of the spiritual man depends upon exercise as well as upon food.

Jesus saith unto them, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." (John 4: 34.) Doing the will of God, that is spiritual exercise. So the maturity and perfectness of spiritual strength which was in Jesus depended not only on his spiritual food—"I live by the Father"—but also on exercising the spiritual strength which that food gave him, thereby assimilating the food and making it a part of himself. Exercising his spiritual strength was, "to do the will of him that sent me."

So it is with us. The spiritual man, Christ in us, attains to a greater or less fullness, not only by sufficient food, but also by using the spiritual strength we get from that food in doing the will of God; in finishing that portion of his work which the Spirit tells us is ours.

Jesus says in John 4: 36, "And he that reapeth, receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal; that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together." It may be said that he gathereth the fruit *in* himself, as he reaps from day to day in this life; since the spiritual man, or Christ in him, becomes

stronger according as he reaps—does the will of God. Now Christ *is* life eternal.

As the natural man dies in us, the spiritual man is perfected

SECTION 30. So though we may be born again, having received the Holy Spirit, yet it is not *we* that are born, but Christ in us. Likewise we may grow to spiritual fullness of stature, and yet not *we,* but the Son of God born in us, grows in us to such fullness of spiritual strength as the abundance determines of spiritual food and spiritual exercise which he receives. And this is in our hands.

It is not *we,* as we exist in our own consciousness, that go to heaven—into the kingdom of God, but only that part of us which is good—the Son of God. "And no man hath ascended up to heaven but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man which is in heaven. (John 3:13.) It is fortunate that this is so, for if we could take the evil part of our nature with us we should be no more happy there than here. The "carnal mind" is enmity against God, and we should be in a state of division against ourselves.

Christ said, "The Kingdom of God is within you," but he did not say that this kingdom occupied our whole being, nor can it until we are

finally purged of all that is evil; in other words, until we are perfected.

As his own death approached, Jesus said: "The hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it, and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal." (John 12:23, 24, 25.) In Luke 13:32, Jesus says, "and the third day I shall be perfected." Christ was glorified by his victory over death in the natural body, and again when in his ascension he passed wholly out of the material into the spiritual world.

And day by day, as the natural man dies in us, the spiritual man is perfected more and more. And day by day, as the natural man dies in us, the spiritual man brings forth fruit more and more. "But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it, and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal." What a blessed thing it is that God has given us power through his Son in us, to live here upon earth in the

kingdom of God in a measure. "He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." (I John 5:12.)

Beginnings of spiritual life

SECTION 31. There is a phase of the subject not yet touched upon, but which we are justified in mentioning, by the analogies which Jesus drew between physical and spiritual life. There is a period before birth in the development of the physical organism when its life is not its own but belongs to the parent. So also there is a period in the development of the spiritual organism when its life is not its own but the heavenly Father's. "For he that hath, to him shall be given; and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath." (Mark 4:25.) "He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." (I John 5:12.)

If then Christ be born in us, we shall have life indeed, as he says in John 5:26: "For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself."

The spiritual oneness of God and Christ

SECTION 32. Most of us have at some time or other found difficulty in the conception of the spiritual oneness of the Father and the Son. Perhaps we may by reference to the Gospels attain to a clearer conception of it.

We find in John 1:14, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth." In John 1:1 we find, "And the Word was God."

Instead of having to comprehend only Christ's identity with the Word, we have to comprehend God's identity with the Word also. This seems to make the matter more difficult, but in reality renders it simpler. For instance, we find in John 5:30, "I and my Father are one." Thus we have in these three verses direct statements that Christ is identical with the Word; that God is identical with the Word, and that Christ and God are identical. Now this identity of Christ with God is unquestionably made more conceivable to our reason by the identity of each of them with the Word.

Let us, for instance, consider Abraham Lincoln. What was his real self? Was it the giant body, six feet four inches tall? Was it the physical body that was Abraham Lincoln's real self? or was it that inward individuality which made him think and act as he did? Surely the real self of the man was the inward man. In our case likewise the spirit which is in us,

that inward man which dictates all our thoughts and actions, is our real self.

The real self of Christ Jesus is the spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit, which is God. Jesus says in John 4: 24, "God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."

Where John says in the first verse of his gospel, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God," he might have said with equal truth: In the beginning was the Spirit and the Spirit was with God, and the Spirit was God; but if he had done so we would not be able to know so certainly where to go to find God. "The Word" truly does not mean the spoken symbols which came from the mouth of Jesus; it means rather the spirit of Jesus, and to find out what manner of spirit this is, we can do no better than to study and think about the words which he spoke and the perfectly harmonious deeds which he did. Where our consideration of his words fails to make plain to us his spirit—the Word—then oftentimes his deeds and life supply the essential spiritual comprehension, the meaning lacking. "And the Word was made flesh, and

dwelt among us." The Word was made manifest by deeds as well as by words, the deeds which Jesus did.

It is worthy of note that we have an absolute guarantee of the truth of Christ's sayings by their perfect harmony with each other, by their harmony with his deeds, and by Christ's promise to his disciples in John 14:26: "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."

Our love for our neighbor is to be expressed in terms of our love for God

SECTION 33. Christ has left to us two commandments, in the perfect observance of which the entire will of God would in us be fulfilled. "Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

There are some eminent divines who apparently make the greater commandment subordinate to the lesser, who practically say to us that if we fulfill the lesser—to love our neighbor as

ourselves—we also fulfill the greater. But is this necessarily so? Is it not possible for a man to love his neighbor as himself, and yet neither love himself or his neighbor on a spiritual plane, with reference to the things of God? Is it not possible for a man who finds his pleasure in the things of this world, to take an equal pleasure in seeing others do likewise? He may wish the best for himself and his neighbor that he is able to see, and still not fulfill the first and great commandment to love the Lord with all his heart, and soul, and mind.

Jesus says that on the observance of *both* these commandments hang all the law and the prophets, and we are, therefore, not justified in saying that the observance of the lesser is all that is necessary. In John 15:12 we find, "This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you." Here it is apparent that the words "as I have loved you" imply a love from the spiritual plane, and that this commandment, therefore, includes both the commandments we have mentioned.

We find the same to be the case in John 13:34, where Jesus says, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another, as I have

loved you, that ye also love one another." The possibility of inadequate interpretation is evidently in Jesus' mind when he adds, "as I have loved you, that ye also love one another." It is plain that in loving one another as Christ loved us, we must love with reference to spiritual things, with reference to the eternal welfare of each other, for such was the manner of his love for us.

With regard, therefore, to the two great commandments, we are not justified in twisting the word of Christ from its true meaning, which clearly is, that the lesser commandment is with reference to the greater; that wherever there may be a seeming conflict in the application of these two commandments, the conflict is to be decided with reference to our love for God and his righteousness, rather than with reference to our love for our neighbor.

In reality there can be no actual conflict between these two commandments, for they are in perfect harmony. But there are times when we are called upon to make a decision as to a *seeming* conflict. In such cases it will be found that this apparent conflict is caused by our failure to reconcile the well-being of our neighbor out-

wardly and inwardly, spiritually and physically. Suppose a situation where we could obtain food or shelter for our neighbor only by committing robbery, perjury, or some other sin against the spiritual man. We are not commanded to love our neighbor more than ourselves. If we would not do this for ourselves we should not do it for our neighbor, and if we would commit such acts for ourselves, it is evident that we do not love God with all our heart, and soul, and mind. Our love and care for the inward welfare of our neighbor is to be placed above that for his outward welfare, the same as for ourselves.

In this connection it is also true that every proper and righteous expression of love for our neighbor in regard to material things is also an expression of our love for his inward welfare, and is, therefore, also an expression of our love for God and his righteousness. As such we can none of us afford to neglect these things. They are of the first importance, both to our neighbor's welfare and to our own. Yet let us assign to the first and great commandment its proper place, the place which Christ assigned to it.

YB 13126